

Expressions like these betray a curious lack of balance; they suggest the man with a grievance, who lets his temper get the better of his judgment. And the animus becomes still more marked when any reference is made to the 'literary journals.' We are told that when some worthless novel is made ephemerally popular by the 'brass band method' of the sensational publisher, these journals 'forthwith fall to gossiping, and keep up a chatter about great sellers, and bewail commercialization in literature.' Furthermore, we read of 'nonsense such as reviewers write in the literary magazines,' and of 'our shallow gabble called reviews.' We are also gravely assured that publishers rarely waste their time in reading the reviews of their own publications, and that periodicals which 'go only to the literary class are to a degree superfluous' for advertising purposes. There is no mistaking the spirit of such words as these; it is the spirit of the very commercialism which the writer elsewhere deprecates, and it serves to weaken his main plea immeasurably. If all 'literary' opinion is to be held thus in contempt, what sort of opinion, we ask in our bewilderment, does our confessing publisher consider deserving of respect? If the judgment of expert criticism is to go unheeded, what judgment is there left for his guidance, save that of the philistine with his commercial aims and his worship of mere success? The dilemma is thus squarely presented, but our writer seems to seize first one horn and then the other, instead of boldly making his choice once for all.

For our own part, there is no difficulty at all in making the choice. The publisher who does not rest his ventures upon a sound basis of literary judgment, and with whom the approval of expert opinion does not count for more than the gains resulting from a meretricious popularity, is not a publisher at all in the higher sense of the term. He is at the best a tradesman, at the worst a 'quack' or a 'shyster.' He can probably make more money by catering to vulgarized tastes than by appealing to refined intelligences, but in adopting this course, he sacrifices every claim to the respect of those whose respect is worth having. That the writer of the little book now under our consideration is to be reckoned among those who would justify this sordid type of publishing by the magnitude of its unholy rewards we do not for a moment suppose. But we cannot help feeling that he has allowed himself to indulge in certain vagaries of expression that, logically developed, would lead to so unfortunate a conclusion. His real ideal, however, we believe to be contained in the following passage:

'As nearly as I can make out the publishing houses in the United States that are conducted as

dignified institutions are conducted with as little degrading commercialism as the old houses whose history has become a part of English literature, and I believe that they are conducted with more ability. Certainly not one of them has made a colossal fortune. Certainly not one of them ever failed to recognize or to encourage a high literary purpose if it were sanely directed. Every one of them every year invests in books and authors that they know cannot yield a direct or immediate profit, and they make these investments because they feel consoled by trying to do a service to literature.'

We have little doubt that an investigation into the motives and guiding principles of the houses thus held up to honor would disclose the fact that their very genuine success has resulted from a constant deference to those very literary standards that are made the object of our writer's ill-advised and unmerited scorn.

THE DECAY OF THE GHOST IN FICTION.

'For one, I cannot purge my mind of that forlorn faith.'—ANDREW LANG.

For approximately a generation, the ghost has been missing from fiction; after a disappearance so sudden and of such far-reaching implications that it is a matter of some amazement that those who profess to concern themselves with the phenomena of imaginative literature should have paid so little attention to it. It is a commonplace that ever since literature began, as well as considerably before that interesting period, what we call 'the supernatural' has been a staple material of the tellers of tales. As there has always been a literature of love, so there has always been a literature of fear; and until the development of the present narrow and timorous popular taste, one had perhaps as strong an appeal as the other. Ghosts in their most literal acceptation—not as the more or less impersonal shades we have sometimes indifferently pictured them—have always been held an essential complement of tangible everyday life, inextricably bound up with religion, with love for the dead, with hunger for the unknown, with many of the most intimate and profound emotions; and their literary use has seemed, to the greater public, not only no less, but even more 'realistic,' than the modern exploitation of the commonplace.

Twenty-five years ago, even, the reader of magazine fiction was still able to shudder to his heart's content. Spectres glided with the precision of long-established custom through the pages of the more conventional compendiums of light literature. The familiar paraphernalia of supernatural incident,—draughty chambers, tempestuous nights, blood-stains, wan-faced women,—were still in constant and elaborate

requisition. And while there was a discreet dribbling of phantoms from week to week or from month to month, a magnificent convocation of the spectral tribe occurred annually. That is to say, a curious association of ideas connected the maximum of ghostly prevalence with Christmas, the season of popular rejoicing; and by way of making sure of these dismal but doubtless salutary companions, it was customary, as Mr. Anstey once remarked, 'to commission a band of ingenious *littérateurs* to turn out batches of ready-made spectres for the Christmas annuals.' The business of chilling the popular spine was taken with due seriousness and was all the more effectually brought about in that the 'magazine ghost,' as this source of popular refreshment was termed, was as stereotyped and conventional as the old-fashioned novel-heroine. Its looks, manner, haunts, companions, and alleged errands were those long since laid down by tradition; it evinced no sensational modern unexpectedness.

But suddenly, and it must surely have seemed mysteriously, the magazine ghost vanished; nor were its eerie footprints traced. Whether by a concerted action of magazine editors, or by a swift and complete paralysis of the contributors' imaginations, or by a profound alteration of popular sentiment, or by the operation of a principle presently to be suggested, the literature of the supernatural ceased to be produced. Can this have happened without protest, without comment, even? The subject is rich in its possibilities of speculation. For if the acceptance and enjoyment of ghost-lore imply a childish quality of mind, as one sometimes hears superior persons assert, then our rejection of them would argue that we are the wisest generation that ever lived. If, again, the reading or writing of such tales demand a freshness of imagination that in our little day has become desiccated, then our plight is pitiable indeed.

There is at hand, of course, an easy but superficial explanation to the effect that a prevalence of ghost-stories must depend upon a stout popular belief in ghosts; and that having lost the one, we must forego the other. The slightest reflection shows that this position is untenable. Not believe in ghosts? We believe in them with all our hearts. Never before, since spectral feet first crossed a man-made threshold, have ghosts been so squarely, openly, and enthusiastically believed in, so assiduously cultivated, as now. We have raised ghost-lore to the dusty dignity of a science. The invocation of the spirits of the dead, far from having its former suggestion of vulgar mystery, is one of the most reputable of practices, which men of learning carry on publicly, with stenographers conveniently at hand. There even flourishes a 'Haunted House Com-

mittee,' appointed and maintained by the foremost society for the promotion of ghosts, and this for the express purpose of encouraging the presence of the shyer and less aggressive spectres in what seem their appropriate habitations,—of making them, as it were, feel at home. We believe in ghosts as sincerely as we believe in the very poor; and in similar fashion we endeavor to live among them, establish a cordial understanding, and write about them in our notebooks. Nor do we believe in them the less because, when on our learned behavior, we may refer to them as 'phantasmogenetic agencies.' Not believe in ghosts? They are our fetish. Let it never be imagined that ghost-stories have suffered decline because of our indifference to their subject-matter, 'material' though our age is commonly held to be. By our very zest in their pursuit, we have possibly proved the reverse of Scott's mistaken theory that to see ghosts it is only necessary to believe in them,—to wish to see. Much truer is the proposition that the seer of ghosts commonly does not premeditate his vision; that spectres manifest themselves by preference to 'unimaginative people in perfect health.'

No small share of the fascination exerted by the ancient and outgrown ghost of fiction was due to its invariable and satisfactory conformity to type. However frequent its intrusion, or however familiar, it was never suffered to deviate from its character, so deeply rooted in human consciousness, as a source of dread. It was the function of the ghost to be consistently unpleasant, and that function was relentlessly fulfilled. No one personal characteristic of the ghost as we know it in song or story or as we learn from the unimpeachable testimony of our friends' friends, can explain its unequalled power to arouse the emotion of fear. Distasteful as is the ghostly habit of reducing its unfleshy essence to a threadlike, infinitely ductile filament—like a bit of transubstantial chewing-gum—in order sneakily to penetrate keyholes; disturbing as is its fashion of upsetting our gravely accepted 'laws of nature'; intolerable as is its lack of vocal organs (for phantoms, with few exceptions, cannot or will not speak);—neither one nor all of these undesirable characteristics can completely solve the interesting riddle of its fear-compelling power. And it is undoubtedly almost as remarkable that having for centuries, in and out of fiction, maintained this consistent and extremely prevalent personality, the ghost should have dropped out of literature altogether. Now, how can this have been?

To go as far back as the early English folktales and ballads, when the wherefore of phantoms was even better understood than now, and when fiction more essentially took its origin

from life, ghost-tales gained their grim effectiveness from the accuracy with which they reflected popular belief. The audiences of that simple day had not attained a sufficient refinement of imagination to delight in vague, casual, incoherent spectres; every ghost had a name and date. What is more important is that there was no ghost that had not a reason for being. The ingenious notion that the spirits of the dead return from an allegedly peaceful Elysium simply to make themselves disagreeable, by way of easing their minds, had not yet suggested itself. On the contrary, the animistic trend of popular thought, which of course greatly favored the appearance of ghosts in general, assigned them likewise adequate and intelligible motives, among the chief of which were: to reveal treasure, to reunite happy lovers, to avenge a crime, and to serve as 'a primitive telegraphic service for the conveyance of bad news.' Ghosts were therefore not only the recognizable shades of the familiarly known dead; they were sinister symbols of crime, remorse, vengeance. If you shuddered at sight of them, it was for a better reason than weak nerves. Horror was not piled on horror, in early ghost-tales, merely to satisfy the artist's own sense of cumulative effect. Each detail had a powerful conventional significance, and the consequent power to arouse a strong primitive emotion. This system not only lent an artistic strength and symmetry to the early literature; it was intensely satisfactory to the Anglo-Saxon mind.

But inevitably, when the motives and the language of literature became more complex, the *rationale* of ghost-lore became affected. Phantoms began to lose their original force, fell into the habit of haunting from motives relatively unworthy. Evidences multiplied of their degeneration into a morbid and meddlesome tribe, with a sadly diminished sense of the fitting and the picturesque. Their visits were even concerned with the payment of debts, of strictly mortal contraction; and they lamentably lost caste by exhibiting themselves as the victims, rather than as the scourge, of conscience. A ghost has been known to go to the trouble of haunting a house for the mere purpose of ensuring the payment of a shilling,—an episode that might well permanently compromise the dignity of the entire spectral tribe. Likewise when they acquired the intrusive habit of giving evidence in trials, the original and forceful idea that ghosts were agents of retribution became seriously coarsened. Legally, the fact that the issue of many an actual trial has hinged on ghostly testimony is of extraordinary interest. So far as imaginative terror-literature is concerned, however, the introduction of this matter serves as a mixed and weakened motive, only.

During the later years of the ghost's popularity in literature, it will readily be seen that the greater number of the earliest ghost-motives were outgrown. It is some time, for instance, since the motive of recovering buried treasure through supernatural aid has been able to 'carry,' the custom of burying treasure having itself somewhat tamely died out. Far more incongruous, even, came to seem the supernatural reunion of lovers, as in the familiar case where the posthumous suitor reappears to bear his still living sweetheart back to the grave with him. Ghosts that are to be understood as the projections of the spirit at the moment of death have always been popular, it is true, but this motive is not in itself strong or picturesque enough to serve as the backbone of a corporate section of imaginative literature.

In short, the only ghost-motive that retained its strength, plausibility, and appeal to the Anglo-Saxon mind was the retribution-motive,—the idea that the ghost's function was to recall, expiate, or avenge a crime. This was impressive; it was terrifying; it had moral and religious significance; it was not subtle; it was susceptible of indefinitely repeated adjustment to time and place. It was the perfect, perhaps the only perfect, ghost-motive for English literature. So valorous is the Anglo-Saxon temper that it scorns or is ashamed to tremble at mere empty shadow-tales. It demands not only to be impressed; there must be an adequate basis for the impression. The clue to the whole matter is that the ghost must not be a wanton and irresponsible power. It must be a moral agent.

Unfortunately, the realization of this simple truth has never been complete. Only subconsciously has the public known what it wanted. As for the tellers of tales, they seem, in those latter days of the ghost's literary existence, to have remained in criminal ignorance of the vital principle of their business. The decay of the ghost in fiction occurred, not through any loss of human interest in the spectral world, but through an indolent misapprehension, on the part of the story-tellers, of the real character of the ghost as we Anglo-Saxons have conceived it. Thus it came about that the ghost, previous to its subsidence, was, as Mr. Lang truly observed, 'a purposeless creature. He appears, nobody knows why; he has no message to deliver, no secret crime to conceal, no appointment to keep, no treasure to disclose, no commissions to be executed, and, as an almost invariable rule, he does not speak, even if you speak to him.' And he adds that inquirers have therefore concluded that the ghost, generically, is 'not all there,'—a dreary result of scepticism, indeed! At the same time, what direct and utilitarian folk could put up with a confirmedly inconsequent ghost,

even for the creepy fascination of shuddering at his phantom footfall? And could there be, on the whole, a more perfect example of the operation of natural selection in art than that, the ghost of fiction becoming unmoral, superficial, and flabby, it was its pitilessly appropriate penalty to be dropped and apparently forgotten?

A small group of kindred volumes, which have appeared during the past year or so, now for the first time indicate that a perception of the true nature of the literary ghost is returning to the absent-minded craft. Stevenson had, it is true, an admirable perception of the terror-inspiring, and he did not make the mistake of being vague; but his was not the temperament that produces the perfect ghost-story. Mr. Henry James, in that masterpiece, 'The Turn of the Screw,' has shown that he can convey a sense of mystery and terror more skilfully than any of his contemporaries; but his work is probably too esoteric to stand as typical, and it remains true that the pattern ghost-tale must be writ large and obvious. If, as now appears, a half-dozen of the ablest writers of the day are realizing this, there is hope for the renaissance of the literary ghost. It has already been proved that the problem of its readjustment to our literature is not insuperable,—that the chambers of our untenanted imaginations stand ready and waiting to be haunted by wraiths that our logic can approve. There may indeed develop with time a regenerated ghost-literature well worth acquaintance; for, as an essayist of other times has somewhat grandiloquently observed, 'Our in-born proneness to a love of the marvellous and unimaginable, which has originated in our imperfect acquaintance with the laws of nature and our own being, does not appear to suffer diminution as education and culture advance; for it is found to coexist with the highest intellectual development and the most refined critical temper.'

OLIVIA HOWARD DUNBAR.

Nehemiah How, a native of Massachusetts, was captured by the Indians in 1745, near the site of Putney, Vermont, and was carried to Quebec, where he was imprisoned with many other British colonists captured during the course of King George's War. After an imprisonment of eight months, he died of a contagious fever, which also carried off many of his fellow-prisoners. The diary which How kept while a prisoner of war was printed in 1748, but has long since disappeared from circulation. It is now reproduced by the Burrows Brothers Co. of Cleveland as one of a commendable list of American reprints, with an introduction and notes by Mr. Victor Hugo Paltsits. It throws light on the alliance between French and Indians during the American colonial wars and on the official life of the French at Quebec, the capital of New France. The setting given the narrative in its new appearance is of the same excellence as the other volumes in this series of reprints.

The New Books.

IN GARDEN AND ORCHARD.*

More and more do our amateur gardeners commit to paper what they have learned by experience, observation, and reading, and what they have dreamed as they worked. They are moved possibly by the joy and help they have themselves found in similar works of other writers, or perhaps they are stirred by that renaissance of garden literature in recent years which has been accompanied by a truer knowledge of gardening as a science and a keener insight into its possibilities as an art. The earlier books were nearly all English, although scattered publications like Celia Thaxter's charming little volume, 'An Island Garden,' go to show that not all the gardening done on this side was of the 'bedding plants' variety that has lately received so many hard words, and that not all the owners of garden plots turned them over to the 'hired man' for cultivation and decoration. Now, indeed, the books on this justly popular subject come so thick and fast that beginners hardly know where to turn, and even the experienced are embarrassed by the riches for their choosing,—whether they are looking for practical advice or for the sympathetic ramblings of other garden lovers like themselves. But the true gardener is not to be deterred by quantity, or even by quality; for it is a fact that no matter how simple or commonplace or amateurish a garden book may be, there is rarely one that does not contain some interesting facts or comments before unthought-of by the reader. Moreover, the true gardener is just as eager to read and criticise the latest advice and comments about the plants he knows by heart as he is to study the annual seed-catalogues when they first appear—and the latter state of mind is proverbial.

Most imposing of the garden books that have lately appeared is an English collaborated production entitled 'Garden Colour.' This is one of the large octavo volumes, with colored reproductions from paintings, that have been imported from England to so considerable an extent during the past year or two. Its thick

* GARDEN COLOUR. By Mrs. C. W. Earle, 'E. V. B.' Rose Kingsley, the Hon. Vicary Gibbs, and others. With notes and water color sketches by Margaret Waterfield. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.

ANOTHER HARDY GARDEN BOOK. By Helena Rutherford Ely. Illustrated. New York: The Macmillan Co.

THE ORCHARD AND FRUIT GARDEN. By E. P. Powell. Illustrated. New York: McClure, Phillips & Co.

HOW TO MAKE A VEGETABLE GARDEN. By Edith Loring Fullerton. Illustrated. New York: Doubleday, Page & Co.

A GARDEN WITH HOUSE ATTACHED. By Sarah Warner Brooks. Illustrated. Boston: Richard G. Badger.